



15. (SBU) It is worth noting that the anger over Ocalan's isolation has coincided with two GOT-PKK armed clashes within the past three weeks. The first, near Lice in Diyarbakir Province, took place on January 16; the second, on January 27 in Idol in Sirnak province. In the Lice skirmish, one Turkish soldier and an unspecified number of PKK fighters were killed. In Idol, press reports indicate the PKK forces started the engagement, which left one Turkish soldier dead. If so, this would represent the first time in a long while that the PKK has mounted an offensive operation.

16. (SBU) Consulate contacts in the Kurdish community agrees that the temperature seems to be rising. The Diyarbakir Branch Association resident told us that Kurds in the province are explaining that Ocalan has been unable to receive visits from family members or lawyers for the past nine weeks because of "weather". He opined that some elements could perceive Ocalan's isolation as a provocation to incite violence and thereby provide a pretext for the GOT to hit back hard. A DEHAP member from Sirnak offered us the view that ordinary people find it very hard to see Ocalan's enforced isolation as anything other than a violation of his human rights. (Note: Amnesty International has now spoken out against Ocalan's isolation, too. End note.) A human rights contact of ours said that Ocalan's health was a matter of genuine concern - if Ocalan were to fall seriously ill or die in custody, it would be easy to imagine a renewal of suicide bomb attacks, as occurred shortly after Ocalan's arrest in Kenya. A former president of the Batman Bar Association emphasized that if the GOT, in denying Ocalan access to his lawyers and family members, is seen to be reneging on its promise to uphold Copenhagen Criteria and EU norms, it will dash many hopes in the region.

17. (SBU) Comment: Whatever the real reason PKK/KADEK leader Abdullah Ocalan has been denied access to visitors since November 2002, our contacts blame the GOT for renewed anger and tension and tanks in the streets. End Comment.

HOLTZ